

**US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Redding Field Office
6640 Lockheed Drive
Redding, CA**

**Decision Record for a Categorically Excluded Action
Carr Fire Emergency Stabilization
DOI-BLM-CAN060-2018-0040-CX**

Introduction and Background

The Carr Fire began July 23, 2018 at approximately 1:15 pm from a suspected vehicle mechanical failure. The fire origin was within Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (NRA) and spread on to lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service (USFS) in subsequent days. Extreme fire behavior occurred on July 28 and 29, when the fire burned to the east into Redding, California, driven by strong winds and plume dominated fire behavior. The Carr Fire destroyed 1,079 residences, 22 commercial structures, and 503 outbuildings, and damaged an additional 277 structures. The fire was managed under Unified Command between CAL FIRE, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and Whiskeytown NRA. At the time of containment on September 4, 2018, the fire had covered 229,651 acres, of which 63,847 acres are BLM-managed. The Carr Fire burned across wide ecological gradients, and through previous fire scars from the 2004 French Fire, 2008 Motion Fire, and 2008 Whiskeytown Complex. These previously burned areas were dominated by shrub communities, which largely experienced stand replacement in the Carr Fire. Plant communities affected by the fire include chaparral fields (e.g., manzanita, ceanothus, and chamise); gray pine/knobcone pine/oak forests; mixed conifer forests; and upper montane forests at the highest elevations. The current fire area was dominated by low and moderate soil burn severity and vegetation mortality. Fire behavior moderated when previous fuels treatments were intersected, particularly in mixed conifer forest communities. Due to the size and extreme nature of this fire, an interagency Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team was deployed on July 28, 2018 to conduct rapid assessments to identify values at risk and prescribe emergency stabilization (ES) recommendations.

The Redding Field Office (RFO) is proposing stabilization and restoration in areas affected by the Carr Fire. The purpose and need for the proposed actions are to protect life and property from unstable landscapes that were created by the Carr Fire. The BAER Team provided a suite of treatment measures recommended to address the values at risk. Based upon those recommendations and follow up field visits by BLM staff, the BLM RFO is proposing actions outlined in the Emergency Stabilization (ES) Plan. These actions will include:

Watershed Stabilization

- Road debris removal and culvert cleanout
- Swasey (Middle Creek) Sediment Basin cleanout
- Soil stabilization

Cultural Resource Stabilization and Protection

- Archaeological site stabilization

- Archaeological site assessment and monitoring

Abandoned Mine Lands (AML)

- AML safety fencing
- Continued AML monitoring

Recreation Trails

- Safety barriers, trail infrastructure repair, culverts, and signs will be repaired and/or replaced
- Clearing trails of debris and restoring trails

Minor Facilities

- Replacement of wattles at Iron Mountain shooting area
- Replacement of Shasta Guild amphitheater

Tree Hazards

- Hazard tree mitigation and area stabilization along trails, roads, public infrastructure, and private property
- Removal of hazard trees through firewood gathering and commercial sales

Habitat Restoration

- Revegetation including planning acorns, broadcast seeding native seed mixes, and planting seedlings of various native species
- Local utilities will be stabilizing roads and work areas on or adjacent to rights-of-way (ROWs) where soils have been disturbed due to power line reconstruction activities. Utilities will apply seed mixes using a hydroseeder.

Decision and Rationale

It is my decision to approve and implement the proposed action. I have determined that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 listed below. Emergency stabilization and rehabilitation actions proposed on Bureau of Land Management lands, involving the agencies permitting, funding, or implementation, must comply with regulations set forth in the *Department of the Interior Manual Part 516 (DM 2)*.

Department of Interior:

Cat Ex DOI Part 46, 46.210 (1):

“Post-fire rehabilitation activities not to exceed 4,200 acres (such as tree planting, fence replacement, habitat restoration, heritage site restoration, repair of roads and trails, and repair of damage to minor facilities such as campgrounds) to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management approved condition from wildland fire damage, or to repair or replace minor facilities damaged by fire. Such activities: Shall be conducted consistent with agency and Departmental procedures and applicable land and resource management plans; Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure; and Shall be completed within three years following a wildland fire.”

Bureau of Land Management:

Cat. Ex: DOI Part 516 Chp 11: 11.9 E (13)

“Amendments to existing rights-of-way, such as the upgrading of existing facilities, which entail no additional disturbances outside the right-of-way boundary.”

Cat. Ex: DOI Part 516 Chp 11: 11.9 G (3):

“Temporary closure of roads and trails.”

Cat. Ex: DOI Part 516 Chp 11: 11.9 J (8):

“Installation of minor devices to protect human life (e.g., grates across mines).”

Additional NEPA Compliance:

DOI-BLM-CA-N060-2018-0010-CX, Redding Field Office. 2018. Road, Trail, and Facilities Maintenance Categorical Exclusion Documentation: This document provides necessary compliance to conduct routine road, trails, and facilities maintenance at developed recreation sites on BLM administered lands within the Redding Field Office management area. A variety of routine infrastructure and minor facility maintenance activities are covered through this Categorical Exclusion.

Compliance with Laws, Regulations, Policies and Land Use Plans

Redding Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Record of Decision. 1993. This RMP provides the overall direction for managing and allocating public land resources and uses in the Redding Resource Area. Direction for fire management included modified suppression techniques to address specific resource concerns, and recognized the need for prescribed fire and hazard fuel reduction. An addendum to this plan, the **Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (1994) (Standards and Guidelines)**, provides direction for management of these BLM lands for protection of the Northern Spotted Owl and late successional forest.

These actions conform to the Redding Resource Management Plan (RMP) June 1993 Record of Decision general guidance as it “protects regionally significant values” and “responds to public interest in providing future recreation use opportunities” (pg 13). Additionally, it is specifically provided for or is clearly consistent with the Trinity Management Area and Shasta Management Area guidance and objectives as follows:

- Trinity Management Area
 - Maintain the riparian and fisheries habitat of anadromous fisheries streams
 - Maintain the existing scenic quality of BLM administered lands
 - Reduce the sediment load entering the Trinity River via Grass Valley Creek for the improvement of anadromous fisheries
- Shasta Management Area
 - Maintain special status species habitat
 - Maintain the existing scenic quality of the area
 - Protect significant historic elements of the French Gulch and Deadwoods mining districts
 - Enhance existing semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities
 - Conserve and interpret prehistoric and historic archaeological resources on public lands
 - Protect the native plant communities and associated fauna of the area
 - Protect the historic values of the area

The proposed project area is within the boundaries of the Northwest Forest Plan and would be subject to the Standards and Guidelines as outlined in the 1994 Amendment. Surveys and assessments have been completed and it has been determined that these actions will have no adverse effect on the Northern Spotted Owls or their Critical Habitat.

These actions are further supported by the following BLM RFO Management Plans:

Fire Management Plan (FMP), Redding Field Office. 2014. The Fire Management Plan identifies direction for fire and fuels management of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the Redding Field Office of Northern California. The BLM RFO's FMP is to identify and integrate all wildland fire management guidance, direction and activities required to implement Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and the National Fire Plan.

Interlakes Special Recreation Management Area Record of Decision, Redding Resource Area. 1998. This plan provides multi-agency coordinated management direction for roughly 75,000 acres of public lands in the upper Clear Creek/Shasta Lake area, with a primary focus on improving trail and OHV recreation opportunities and reducing fire hazards.

Swasey Drive Area Implementation Plan, Shasta County California, Redding Field Office. 2004. This plan was developed primarily for the long-term protection of the Swasey Drive cultural resources, and includes direction for other resources of concern including noxious weeds, hazardous fuel loads, and wildlife and fisheries.

Consultation

Letters describing the actions within this Categorical Exclusion (CX), initiating consultation with potentially impacted Native American Tribes were emailed on August 22, 2018 and sent certified mail on August 30, 2018. Further consultation in the form of phone calls and meetings occurred during the planning and development of this CX. National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 compliance is met through the Emergency Situations direction (section 10) within the 2014 California BLM State Protocol Agreement.


All necessary steps were taken by a qualified staff specialist(s) to identify, record, and evaluate effects on cultural properties if present. These steps comply with all standards and guidelines of the 2014 Protocol Agreement between BLM and the California State Historic Preservation Officer. Based on design features identified in this environmental analysis, there will be no adverse impacts to eligible, potentially eligible, or listed National Register of Historic Places site(s) district(s), or Traditional Cultural Properties.

BLM has completed informal consultation with USFWS during late August and early September 2018 and it has been determined that formal consultation is not required or necessary for these actions. Section 7 consultation occurred in regards to the Swasey (Middle Creek) Sediment Basin in 2003.

It is my determination that all necessary steps have been taken to comply with the provisions of the 1994 Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. For the foregoing reasons, this contract is in compliance with the 1994 ROD, as stated in the U.S. District Court in *Pacific Coast Fed. of Fishermen's Assn. et al. v. Natl. Marine Fisheries Service, et al.*, Civ. No. 04-1299RSM (W.D. Wash) (*PCFFA IV*), and constitutes my ACS compliance certification.

Administrative Remedies

Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days after publication of this decision. If a notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. The notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Department of Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, E-1712, Sacramento, CA 95825.


Field Manager

CHARLES WRIGHT, ACTING

21 SEPT 2018
Date

Attachment 1: Projects that Comply With the 2001 Survey and Manage Record of Decision and Plan Amendment with Subsequent ASRs except for the Red Tree Vole or the Pechman Exemptions: Language for Inclusion in NEPA/Decision Documents

A. Projects that Comply With the 2001 Survey and Manage Record of Decision and Plan Amendment with Subsequent ASRs except for the Red Tree Vole.

The Carr Fire Emergency Stabilization project is consistent with the 2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, as incorporated into the Redding Resource Management Plan.

This project utilizes the December 2003 species list. This list incorporates species changes and removals made as a result of the 2001, 2002, and 2003 Annual Species Reviews with the exception of the Red Tree Vole. For the red tree vole, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *KSWC et al. v. Boody et al.*, 468 F3d 549 (9th Cir. 2006) vacated the category change and removal of the red tree vole in the mesic zone, and returned the red tree vole to its status as existed in the 2001 ROD S&Gs, which makes the species Category C throughout its range.

The project area was examined and as noted in Redding Field Office Consistency Review of Northwest Forest Plan Implementation 1.B. checklist. Upon review of the above survey criteria, it has been determined that the project occurs within the range of several S&M species, consistent with the last valid Record of Decision as stated above. The overall project does contain suitable habitat for these species, though in many places that habitat is significantly degraded in the project area due to wildfire. However, the project does not negatively affect species or their habitat project activities are primarily limited to established roads, trails, and other infrastructure or there is minimal ground disturbance involved in the activities. Therefore, the project does not meet required survey criteria.